Billy Mitchell, The Air Service And The Mingo War*

By Maurer Maurer and Calvin F. Senning

On Friday afternoon, August 26, 1921, "three monster olive-green planes" bearing Air Service markings were lined up on a field at Kanawha City, across the river from Charleston, West Virginia. To a reporter with memories of the recent war in Europe, the field had "the appearance of a miniature squadron base in France." The Army officers who had flown the planes from Bolling Field in the nation's capital had on Sam Browne belts that were "sagging with the weight of side arms." Mechanics in "greasy jumpers" hurried about their work as trucks arrived with gasoline and supplies. One of the planes, the one with "the pennant of the fleet flagship on its rudder," was named *Seagull*.[1] It belonged to a brigadier general wearing "a pistol, four rows of ribbons and two spurs."[2] The spurs did not fool anyone. Billy Mitchell was a famous aviator. He was so famous, in fact, that the reporters insisted on referring to him as the "Commander of Army Airmen" or as the "Chief of Air Service," whereas in reality he was the second in command, the Assistant Chief.[3]

For several weeks Mitchell had been engaged in Project B, the bombing exercises against the *Ostfriesland* and other warships. But Mitchell realized that sinking the navy was not enough. In order to gain fuller support for the Air Service, and for his theories of air power, he would have to present to the public the picture of a versatile instrument capable of serving the nation in many ways. Thus, when a small "war" broke out in West Virginia in 1921 as a result of labor troubles in the coal industry, Mitchell welcomed the opportunity to demonstrate the tactical mobility of the Air Service and its usefulness in quelling civil disturbances.[4]

John L. Lewis and the United Mine Workers of America were trying to unionize the mines in Mingo County, southwest of Charleston, in an effort to get higher wages, better working conditions, and above all, recognition of the right of collective bargaining. When the operators refused to deal with the union, a strike was called.[5] In

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[1] The Charleston (W. Va.) *Gazette*, Aug. 27, 1921.

[2] Helen Blankenhorn, "Marching Through West Virginia," *The Nation*, Vol. 113, No. 2932 (Sept. 14, 1921), 288-289. Blankenhorn apparently was a reputable reporter (See *The Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No. 26 [March 25, 1922], 976.) However, Maj. Gen. St. Clair Streett, who was with Mitchell at Charleston, says that, as he remembers it after forty-three years, Mitchell wore "no pistol, no spurs, and only two rows of ribbons." (Streett to Maurer, Aug. 26, 1964.)

[3] Blankenhorn, "Marching Through West Virginia," *loc. cit.*; *Gazette*, Aug. 27, 1921.

[4] William Mitchell, *Winged Defense: The Development and Possibilities of Modern Air Power—Economic and Military* (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1925), 75-76, 187-188, and *passim*.

[5] Office of the Judge Advocate General, *Federal Aid in Domestic Disturbances, 1903-1922*, Sen. Doc. 263, 67 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1922), 313-316; U. S. Senate, Committee on Education and Labor, *Hearings . . . Pursuant to S. Res. 80*, 67 Cong., 1 Sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1921); John M. Bush, "Strikes in the Southern West Virginia Coal Fields, 1912-1922" (M. A. Thesis, West Virginia University, 1960), *passim*; The New York *Times*, Aug.-Sept., 1921, *passim*; *Gazette*, Aug.-Sept., 1921, *passim*.

Courtesy Smithsonian Institution National Air Museum

Brigadier General William (Billy) Mitchell

that mountainous region, the scene of the notorious feud between the Hatfields and McCoys, such a situation was bound to lead to violence. "Uncle Tolbert," a patriarch of the Hatfield clan, told a reporter, "Them strikers ain't int'rested in recognition o' no coal mine unions no more than you and I be." Tolbert, who should have been an authority on the subject, explained, "Them fellers are just naturally hot-headed and lookin' for trouble." If they got some "moonshine" nothing could stop them "until there's been a ruckus."[6] A ruckus there was. Taking up arms, the striking miners clashed on several occasions with mine guards and state police.

A bigger ruckus was in the making late in August, when some 7,000 miners from many parts of the state assembled a few miles away in the mountains of Boone County. Their plan was to march through Logan County into Mingo, drive off the mine guards, and force the operators to recognize the union.[7]

Opposing this "army" was another made up of some 500 deputies led by Sheriff Don Chafin of Logan County. In the struggle between the miners and mine operators Chafin was admittedly on the side of the latter, and many of his deputies (as was clearly established in a Senate investigation into the situation in West Virginia) were paid from funds that the operators had contributed. Although his force was the smaller, Chafin had the advantage when it came to arms. He had machine guns, which he placed at strategic points along the border between Logan and Boone Counties. And he had airplanes for reconnaissance and bombing.[8]

Governor Ephriam F. Morgan had no troops to use because the National Guard of the state had been drafted during World War I and had not yet been reorganized. His solution was to ask President Warren G. Harding to send federal forces, including airplanes armed with machine guns, to disband the army of miners.[9]

The President did not want to use the Army unless absolutely necessary. The Republican administration in Washington took the position that the task of preserving law and order in West Virginia belonged to the state, and that state officials had done very little as yet to carry out their responsibilities. Nevertheless, federal troops were alerted, and Brigadier General Harry H. Bandholtz, Commandant of the District of Washington, was sent to investigate conditions in the area.[10]

After preparations had been made to fly Bandholtz to West Virginia in an Army plane, the plans were altered. The New York *Times* said that the change was made because of the lack of a suitable landing place in the state, but perhaps the General, an in-

6 *Times*, Aug. 21, 1921.
7 *Ibid.*, Aug. 25, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 24, 1921.
8 *Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1921; *Times*, Aug. 26, 1921; *West Virginia Coal Fields: Personal Views of Senators Kenyon and Views of Senators Sterling, Phipps, and Watson*, Sen. Doc. 401, 67 Cong., 2 Sess. (Washington: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1922), 3-4.
9 *Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1921; *Times*, Aug. 26, and 27, 1921.
10 *Times*, Aug. 26, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 26 and 30, 1921.

fantryman, wanted to keep his feet on the ground. At any rate, Bandholtz went by train, leaving Washington at 2:00 P.M. on Thursday, August 25. Two hours earlier an Army pilot had taken off from Bolling Field to fly to West Virginia. He had some trouble with his plane and had to make an emergency landing, but he arrived at Charleston at 5:30 and found a landing field at Kanawha City. Noting that the pilot had checked in at a hotel for the night, a reporter for the Charleston *Gazette* concluded that the Army plane was to be used to fly Bandholtz over the "battle zone."[11]

Arriving at Charleston in the middle of the night, Bandholtz got the Governor out of bed for a conference at 3:15 Friday morning. Forty-five minutes later the General met the head of the local district of the United Mine Workers, C. Frank Keeney, who left Charleston at 5:30 to talk to the miners and ask them to go home. The situation, indeed, had become critical. The top story of the *Gazette* that morning was headlined: "ARMED MINERS AND DEPUTIES CLASH NEAR BLAIR, LOGAN COUNTY REPORT; Three Hundred Deputies Engaged in Battle With Armed Miners Near Logan County Line, While Women and Children Flee Territory Into Boone County."[12]

President Harding was keeping a close watch on developments. On Friday morning he conferred with the Assistant Secretary of War, J. Mayhew Wainwright, and the Army's Deputy Chief of Staff, Major General James G. Harbord. Later that day the trouble in West Virginia was discussed at a meeting of the cabinet.[13]

While Keeney was on his mission to the front, Captain William C. Ocker, flying a DH-4 from Bolling Field, arrived at Kanawha City. Mitchell and his aide, Captain St. Clair Streett, arrived soon afterward in another DeHavilland, the *Seagull*.[14] As was usual in an age when the airplane was yet a novelty, a large crowd gathered to see what was going on, and as usual the airmen had trouble keeping the children away from the machines. Quite naturally there was speculation concerning the reason the planes were there. Some people thought that the Army was preparing to establish a permanent air base at Kanawha City, but persons who "claimed to be versed in strategy" told a reporter that the planes probably would be used to maintain communication if the federal forces were sent into the state.[15]

Ocker was reluctant to talk about his duties, but finally he explained to newsmen that he was to report "on the value of the field as a center from which a fleet of planes would work should it be necessary to oppose the miners with federal troops." To prepare for such an eventuality, the Captain had given orders to cut down some

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[11] *Times*, Aug. 26, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 26, 1921.
[12] *Times*, Aug. 27, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 26 and 30, 1921.
[13] *Times*, Aug. 27, 1921.
[14] *Gazette*, Aug. 27, 1921; Streett to Maurer, June 7, 1964.
[15] *Gazette*, Aug. 27, 1921.

trees on the field.[16] When Mitchell arrived, he did not hesitate in telling a reporter how he thought air power might be employed in West Virginia:

"All this could be left to the air service," he said. "If I get orders I can move in the necessary forces in three hours."

"How would you handle masses of men under cover in gullies?"

"Gas," said the general. "Gas. You understand we wouldn't try to kill these people at first. We'd drop tear gas all over the place. If they refused to disperse then we'd open up with artillery preparation and everything."[17]

By 3:30 Friday afternoon it appeared that neither the Air Service nor any other Army force would be needed. Keeney reported that the miners had agreed to go home. On Saturday Bandholtz went out to see for himself. There was a delay while the General talked with Keeney, but at 11:00 A.M. the party left Charleston in three automobiles. With the General were his aide, Colonel Stanley H. Ford; Major Charles F. Thompson, from headquarters of the Fifth Corps Area; Adjutant General John H. Charnock of West Virginia; Governor Morgan's secretary; a member of the state legislature; several "war" correspondents; and a representative of the United Mine Workers, William M. Blizzard, who went along to "keep the boogers off." Blizzard performed his duties when the cars were stopped by miners lined up across the road in Boone County. Arriving at one of the camps, Bandholtz talked to the men, threatening martial law if they did not go home. The miners were impressed. One of them told the General, "My Gawd, we would not revolt against the national gov'ment." Satisfied with the reaction, Bandholtz returned to Charleston and boarded a train for Washington. There was nothing to keep Mitchell at Kanawha City, so he put his spurs into the *Seagull* and rode back to Bolling Field.[18]

But that was not the end of the so-called Mingo War. On Sunday, the day after Bandholtz left for Washington, five miners were killed and three deputy sheriffs captured in a pitched battle fought on the border between Boone and Logan Counties. On Monday there were reports that the miners were reassembling to march on Mingo. The Governor appealed again to the President for federal troops to put an end to the violence. This time after two conferences with Secretary of War John W. Weeks, and a third with Harbord, Bandholtz, and a delegation from West Virginia, Harding issued a proclamation ordering the miners to return home by Thursday noon, September 1. Bandholtz was sent back to Charleston, and troops were again alerted. The troops were not to be sent unless the

[16] *Ibid.*

[17] Blankenhorn, "Marching Through West Virginia," *loc. cit.* Gen. Streett does not believe that Mitchell would have made such a statement to the press. (Streett to Maurer, Aug. 26, 1964.) Mitchell, however, was never noted for restraint in his public remarks concerning the Air Service. For an indication of the Army's attitude toward events in West Virginia, see *Infantry Journal*, Vol. XIX, No. 5 (Nov. 1921), 576-578.

[18] *Times*, Aug. 27 and 28, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 28, 1921.

miners failed to obey the President's order, but before the expiration of the period for compliance the Air Service was ordered into action.[19]

The service was proud of the way it reacted in the emergency:[20]

> Brig. Gen. William Mitchell . . . received an order at ten o'clock a.m. Sept. 1, at Langley Field to send an air force to the disturbed area. He selected the 88th Squadron, which was off on its flight to West Virginia, fully equipped, one hour later. At three p.m. the same day the fifteen planes had completed the flight of 320 miles to West Virginia.

The information put out by the service, however, was not only misleading but inaccurate. The order to dispatch an air force to West Virginia had not come as a complete surprise. Mitchell had known for a week that he might have to send planes, and preparations had begun at Langley Field, Virginia, on August 26, while he was at Charleston.[21] Further, the deployment was not accompished within a few hours, nor did it come off as smoothly as the Air Service wanted people to believe.

There was no problem finding men and equipment. For several weeks, all through the summer of 1921, a large part of the tactical strength of the Air Service had been based at Langley Field as part of the 1st Provisional Air Brigade that Mitchell had brought together for Project B. Mitchell thus had his pick of the best. The force he dispatched to West Virginia was built around, and went under the name of, the 88th Squadron, but it included men and equipment from other units and was commanded by Major Davenport Johnson, who was especially selected for the job.[22] Mitchell probably would have liked to have led his task force himself, but other activities, including preparations for tests against the battleship *Alabama* during September, required his attention.[23]

The field order for the operation was issued at 10:30 A.M., on Thursday, September 1, by Major William C. Sherman, Assistant Chief of Staff, G-3, 1st Provisional Air Brigade. The 88th Squadron, under Johnson's command, would proceed to Charleston that same day. The planes, fifteen DH-4B's, would be equipped with machine guns and supplied with 900 rounds of ammunition. Two Martin bombers would serve as transports, carrying extra ammunition, medical supplies, the flight surgeon, and replacements. A photographic detachment and a communications section would go by air. Additional personnel and equipment would move by rail. Bombs would

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19 *Times*, Aug. 29, 30, and 31, 1921; *Gazette*, Aug. 29, 30, and 31, 1921; Maj. Gen. J. G. Harbord to Brig. Gen. H. H. Bandholtz, Aug. 31, 1921, in *Federal Aid in Domestic Disturbances*, 320-321.

20 "Flight Record by 88th Air Squadron, U. S. A." *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. LIX, No. 2 (Sept. 17, 1921), 56. See remarks attributed to Mitchell in *History of 50th Observation Squadron (Reduced Strength)* (Langley Field, Va., 1923) 10.

21 Hq., 1st Prov. Air Brig., Admin. Cir. No. 33, Aug. 26, 1921; Hq., 1st Prov. Air Brig., G. O. No. 13, Aug. 26, 1921; Hq., 1st Prov. Air Brig., Info. Bull. No. 29, Sept. 1, 1921; *The Roanoke (Va.) Times*, Sept. 2, 1921.

22 Brig. Gen. William Mitchell, Report on the Operations of the 1st Provisional Air Brigade, April-August 1921, Aug. 29, 1921.

23 Brig. Gen. William Mitchell, Report on the Operations of the 1st Provisional Air Brigade in the Bombing of the U.S.S. *Alabama*, [Sept. 1921].

be shipped by express. The planes would begin taking off at 11:00 and fly to Roanoke, Virginia. There they would land for replenishment of gas and oil before flying across the main ridges of the Alleghenies to West Virginia. The squadron's command post would be at Langley until 3:00 P.M. and thereafter at Charleston.[24]

At 10:54 a telegram was sent to Roanoke to inform the Mayor that twenty planes would arrive that afternoon at a field four miles north of that city. The Mayor was asked to have 2,000 gallons of high-test gasoline and 200 gallons of oil sent to the field for the planes.

Lieutenant Rex K. Stoner took off from Langley at 11:00 and arrived at Roanoke at 1:15. Setting his plane down in a field of alfalfa, he crawled out of the cockpit and was greeted by Mayor W. W. Boxley and other city officials. Boxley had made arrangements for gasoline and oil, and tow trucks already had arrived at the field, on the Price farm, which had been used by Army planes on a previous occasion. The news had gone around town, and soon a large crowd gathered to watch the planes arrive.

About 4:00 that afternoon, "eight black specks, which looked like a covey of birds, were seen coming over the top of the mountains east of the city." Ordering the people from the field, Stoner spread out a large white sheet to mark the landing ground and then used a white flag to direct the landing of the planes. When they were down, the flight leader, Captain Lloyd L. Harvey, reported that Davenport Johnson had had trouble with his DH-4 and had gone back to Langley to get another plane.

Two more planes arrived at 4:30, just before it began to rain very hard. During the storm two planes flew over the field, but they went on and landed northwest of the city. These planes moved to the Price farm when the rain was over. Two more arrived at 5:00, and three, including Johnson's, landed half an hour later. Altogether there were seventeen DH-4's at Roanoke. It was no secret that these planes were on their way to West Virginia for strike duty, and, as Johnson remarked to a reporter, "everyone knows [they] are heavily laden with machine guns, bombs, and other accessories for reaching lawless bands in mountain passes."

Johnson had planned to leave the enlisted men to guard the planes while the officers went to Hotel Roanoke for the night, but most of the men were relieved from guard duty when the American Legion took over the task of standing watch. Twenty-eight officers and men were guests of Edward L. Stone for dinner at the Shenandoah Club.[25]

That same evening veterans of the late war in Europe were also guarding Army planes that had arrived at Kanawha City earlier

[24] Hq., 1st Prov. Air Brig., F. O. No. 17, Sept. 1, 1921.
[25] *Roanoke (Va.) World News*, Sept. 1 and 2, 1921; *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 2, 1921.

in the day. The ex-soldiers had volunteered for this duty when there were rumors that these planes, three DH-4's and two Martin bombers, would be sabotaged.[26]

At Roanoke the plan was for the seventeen planes to take off early on Friday morning, beginning at 4:30. There was a delay, however, because the rain of the previous day had made the field soft. Some of the machines had sunk deep into the ground and had to be jacked up to get them out of the mud. Stoner got away at 6:30, and the second plane left at 7:00. Then it was Lieutenant Valentine S. Miner's turn. While taking off he hit a corn shock in an adjacent field, lost control of his DH-4, and crashed. Neither he nor his passenger, Cadet Virgil D. Lovell, was injured, but the plane was damaged so badly that it had to be dismantled and sent to the depot at Fairfield, Ohio, for repairs. The last plane did not get away from Roanoke until four o'clock that afternoon.[27]

On the way from Roanoke to Charleston, Captain John J. Devery, Jr., and Cadet Edward J. Snyder had engine trouble and was forced down on a rough field near Beckley, West Virginia. In landing their DH-4 they hit a small mound, breaking an axle and blowing a tire.[28]

Lieutenants Donald R. Goodrich and Edgar A. Liebhauser and their observers, Sergeant E. E. Dildine and Cadet James A. Lee, joined Devery at Beckley the next day. After leaving Roanoke they had become lost in a fog and had spent Friday night at Mooresburg, Tennessee. On Saturday they had headed their DH-4's toward Charleston but had run into a severe storm. Goodrich tried to land, hit a ditch, wiped off the landing gear, and demolished his plane. Liebhauser, running low on gas, landed on the side of a hill. His DH-4 hit a fence, crashed, and burned.[29]

It was miraculous that none of the eight men involved in these accidents had been killed or seriously hurt. The only person who suffered any injury was Lovell, whose left arm was cut when Miner's plane crashed. Four of the DH-4's, however, had been wrecked. And that was not all.

On Friday afternoon a Martin bomber, piloted by Lieutenant Leslie P. Arnold was blown off course while flying from Aberdeen, Maryland, to Charleston. It was nearly dark when Arnold attempted to set the bomber down on a small field near Fairmont, West Virginia. The plane struck a fence and was wrecked, but neither Arnold nor any of his three passengers—Captain Simpson R. Stribling (Ordnance Department), Lieutenant William C. Morris, and Private Clairborne —was injured.[30]

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[26] *Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1921.

[27] *Roanoke Times*, Sept. 2, 1921; *Roanoke World News*, Sept. 2, 1921. See also Air Service, List of Non-Fatal Accidents, 1918-1926, which incorrectly indicates the date of Miner's mishap as Sept. 3.

[28] List of Non-Fatal Accidents, *Gazette*, Sept. 4, 1921.

[29] List of Non-Fatal Accidents, *Gazette*, Sept. 4, 1921. Both Lt. Gen. James H. Doolittle and Brig. Gen. James A. Mollison recall that the weather was bad and that there were low clouds. Doolittle to Maurer, Sept. 16, 1964; Mollison to Maurer, Oct. 6, 1964.)

[30] List of Non-Fatal Accidents, *Gazette*, Sept. 5, 1921; *Times*, Sept. 5, 1921.

The crew of another bomber was not so fortunate. Three Martins were on their way back to Langley on Saturday when they ran into a severe storm southeast of Charleston. Flying 70 miles an hour at 4,000 feet, the planes were in formation with Lieutenant Harry L. Speck leading in bomber No. 5, the same plane which six weeks before had led the final attack on the dreadnought *Ostfriesland*. As Speck banked to the left, apparently intending to turn around and go back to Charleston, his plane went into a nose dive and crashed. The pilot of one of the other bombers, No. 24, circled as low as possible and saw Speck's plane burning on the ground. Unable to find a landing place nearby, No. 24 returned to Charleston, where the crew reported that they had been unable to determine exactly where Speck had gone down, but thought it was near Poe, in Nicholas County. The third plane, turning eastward to get out of the storm, landed at Seebert, West Virginia.

In an effort to locate Speck's plane, the Army asked for help from the people in Nicholas County. Davenport Johnson sent his flight surgeon, Major Samuel M. Story, and Lieutenant Winfield S. Hamlin from Kanawha City to Nicholas County to direct the search. The supervisor of the telephone company in that area rang phone after phone in an attempt to find someone who knew where the bomber had gone down. Hundreds of people combed the mountains while Army planes from Kanawha City searched for the wreckage.

On Tuesday, September 6, Ben Hughes of Nicholas County was searching in a heavily wooded area on the north side of Twentymile Creek, about ten miles northwest of Summersville, when he heard faint cries and groans. Pushing through the brush, he soon came upon the plane. Speck and three others—Lieutenant William S. Fitzpatrick, Sergeant Arthur R. Brown, and Private Walter B. Howard—had died in the crash. The fifth member of the crew, Corporal Alexander C. Hazelton, had survived and, although badly injured, had managed to crawl a short distance from the wreckage. Hughes gave the Corporal a drink of water and made him as comfortable as possible before setting out for help. When Hughes returned with some of the other searchers, Hazelton was carried more than a mile through the woods to a road, placed in an automobile, and taken to Summersville. From there the Corporal was removed to a hospital at Montgomery, where doctors found that he had internal injuries that were serious but not necessarily fatal. By Thursday the Corporal had recovered sufficiently to talk about the accident, to tell how Speck had made a heroic effort to prevent the crash but "had been impotent against the elements." That afternoon funeral services were held at Summersville for the four men who had died in the crash.[31]

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[31] *Air Service, Airplane Fatalities in U. S. Army Air Service for 1921; List of Non-Fatal Accidents; Chief of Air Service to Maj. Samuel M. Story, and Chief of Air Service to 1st Lt. Winfield S. Hamlin, Sept. 15, 1921, in Hq., 1st Prov. Air Brig., G. O. No. 17, Sept. 20, 1921; "Martin Bomber Wrecked" Aerial Age Weekly* Vol. XIV, No. 2 (Sept. 19, 1921), 39; *Air Service News Letter*, Vol. V, No. 36 (Oct. 14, 1921), 13; *Times*, Sept. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, 1921; *Gazette*, Sept. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, 1921; *Congressional Record*, 67 Cong., 2 Sess., Vol. 62, No. 99 (April 11, 1922), 5845; Brig. Gen. William Mitchell, "Safety in Flight," *The American Review of Reviews*, Vol. LXV, No. 2 (Feb. 1922), 166-172.

The miners, meantime had proved to be less formidable adversaries to Mitchell's airmen than fog, electrical storms, and inadequate landing facilities. This does not mean, however, that West Virginia had been free of violence. The miners had not obeyed the President's order to disperse, and on Wednesday, August 31, there had been heavy fighting in which eleven people were killed. Bandholtz, making his second trip to the state, arrived in Charleston early the next morning and sent Colonel Ford to the front to order the miners to disband. When Ford returned at 11:30 that evening he went straight to Bandholtz's room in the Kanawha Hotel in Charleston to report that the miners showed no signs of obeying. Less than two hours later the General sent a telegram to Harbord, recommending that the troops on alert be sent immediately. That same night infantry regiments started moving by train from Camp Knox, Kentucky; Camp Sherman, Ohio; and Camp Dix, New Jersey. In addition, the War Department sent a detachment of the Chemical War Service, with tear gas, from the Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland.[32]

Bandholtz and his staff, which besides Ford included Colonel Walter A. Bethel of the Judge Advocate General's Department as legal adviser, set up headquarters in the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company building in downtown Charleston. President Harding had signed an order declaring martial law in the area, but it was not to be promulgated unless absolutely necessary. Bandholtz hoped that the mere presence of federal troops would induce the miners to capitulate.[33]

On Friday the General directed Davenport Johnson to send out his planes to find where the miners were camped. In a message to the War Department that night, Bandholtz said, "Airplane reconnaissance upon return reports everything quiet throughout the disturbed area during reconnaissance. Other reports indicate that there was at least the usual amount of fighting during the day."[34]

The fighting ended quickly, however, when the infantry appeared. With full field equipment, including machine guns, artillery, horses, baggage wagons, ammunition carts, radio gear, and camp kitchens, the troops began arriving on Friday night. On Saturday their columns were strung out along mountain roads as they moved up to the front. About 400 miners surrendered that day. When they had been disarmed, they were put aboard trains and sent out of the area. More surrendered on Sunday, and the War Department canceled orders for the movement of another regiment to West Virginia.[35]

Not a shot was fired by the infantry, and the only tear gas used was for a demonstration that the Chemical Warfare detachment put

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[32] *Times*, Sept. 1, 2, and 3, 1921; *Gazette*, Sept. 1, 2, and 3, 1921; *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. LIX, No. 3 (Sept. 10, 1921), 36.

[33] *Times*, Sept. 1, 2, and 3, 1921; Harbord to Bandholtz, Aug. 31, 1921, in *Federal Aid in Domestic Disturbances*, 320-321.

[34] *Times*, Sept. 3, 1921.

[35] *Times*, Sept. 3, 4, and 5, 1921; *Gazette*, Sept. 3, 4, and 5, 1921.

on for newsmen.[36] There were reports, however, that Army planes had bombed the miners. Denying that the Air Service was responsible, Secretary of War Weeks said that state officials had an airplane in operation, and that if there had been any bombing it apparently had been done by this machine.[37]

One of the planes that Sheriff Chafin had obtained for the Logan County "army" was used for a bombing mission on Wednesday, August 31, the day before the 88th Squadron was ordered to West Virginia. Flying over the battle front, the pilot had dropped a bomb, that "virtually shook the steep mountain hills" when it hit the ground and exploded.[38]

On the following day a bomb, which fortunately proved to be a dud, fell between two women who were washing clothes in their back yard. The district office of the United Mine Workers placed the bomb on exhibit at its headquarters in Charleston. It was a homemade device, constructed from two pieces of four-inch pipe, each eight inches long, connected by a sleeve and capped at each end. Inside were iron bolts and nuts, and about five pounds of explosive.[39]

Another mission, dispatched by Chafin on Friday, September 2, was more successful. This time the bombs went off, forcing the miners to retire from the position they had held. Newsmen were unable to learn the number of casualities because the miners had "carried their dead and wounded away with them."[40]

The 88th Squadron, however, had no part in such operations. Bandholtz informed the War Department on September 4 that his planes "were used exclusively for reconnaissance. They have dropped no bombs and have fired no shots." Altogether the Squadron flew a half dozen or so reconnaissance missions. For these operations the planes carried no ammunition and the pilots wore no side arms. Some of the planes, however, sustained minor damage from bullets that presumably were fired by the miners.[41]

Many of the people of West Virginia resented the use of federal force, but the airmen were popular with the citizens of Charleston. The Army planes attracted a lot of attention by their flights over the city, and hundreds of people visited the field at Kanawha City to see the machines and watch the activity. Visitors brought cigars and cigarettes for the flyers, and housewives in the area provided coffee and pails of ice cream.[42] Except for the accidents, and particularly the loss of Speck's plane, the expedition to West Virginia probably was a pleasant diversion for the men of the 88th Squadron.

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[36] *Gazette*, Sept. 6, 1921; Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 76; *Times*, Sept. 24, 1921; *Aviation and Aircraft Journal*, Vol. XI, No. 14 (Oct. 3, 1921) 396-397; *Aerial Age Weekly*, Vol. XIV, No. 4, (Oct. 4, 1921), 85.

[37] *Gazette*, Sept. 4, 1921; *Times*, Sept. 4, 1921.

[38] *Gazette*, Sept. 1, 1921.

[39] *Times*, Sept. 4, 1921. See *The Survey*, Vol. XLVII, No. 5 (Oct. 29, 1921), 178 for a picture of "One of the thirteen bombs alleged to have been dropped by a local airplane from Logan County along the line held by the union miners."

[40] *Times*, Sept. 5, 1921.

[41] *Times*, Sept. 5, 1921; Mollison to Maurer, Oct. 6, 1964.

[42] *Gazette*, Sept. 2, 1921.

On Monday, September 5 (Labor Day), Bandholtz made an inspection tour and found everything quiet. By Wednesday all of the miners had gone home. On Thursday the 88th Squadron, the Chemical Warfare detachment, and one of the infantry regiments left for their regular posts. The other regiments were to remain in the area as assurance against any further trouble, and the 88th Squadron was to leave a detachment, consisting of two messenger planes with the necessary crews, mechanics, and supplies at Kanawha City. The following Monday Bandholtz turned over command in West Virginia to Colonel Carl A. Martin of the 19th infantry and went back to Washington.[43]

The redeployment of the 88th Squadron to Langley Field on September 8 apparently was accomplished with only one minor accident. Because of low pressure in the gas tank, Lieutenant Miner made a forced landing in a small, rough field on the side of a hill near Narrows, Virginia, some forty-five or fifty miles west of Roanoke. Neither Miner nor his passenger, Sergeant Rodgers, was injured, and the only damage to the DH-4B was a broken axle, which was defective.[44]

A week later one of the DH-4's that had been held in West Virginia was involved in an accident. While Lieutenant James A. Mollison was landing at Kanawha City on September 15, one of the wheels on his plane collapsed. The landing gear, propeller, and radiator were damaged, but Mollison and his observer, Private Howell, were not injured.[45] The miners gave no more trouble and at the beginning of October the 88th's detachment at Kanawha City rejoined the squadron at Langley Field.[46]

The Mingo War was one of the highlights in the 88th's history in the years between the First and Second World Wars. The Squadron, which subsequently became the 436th Bombardment Squadron, proudly claimed "the distinction of being the only Air Corps unit ever to have participated in a civil disturbance."[47]

Billy Mitchell was pleased with the operation. Later, in commenting on the "incredibly short space of time" required to complete the movement to West Virginia, he said he had used "the same organizations and same airplanes that had sunk the battleships far out at sea; now they had crossed the Alleghenies and landed in the midst of the mountains" To Mitchell the Mingo War provided "an excellent example of the potentialities of air power, that can go wherever there is air, no matter whether they may be over the water or over the land."[48]

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[43] *Times*, Sept. 6, 7, 8, 9, and 13, 1921; *Army and Navy Journal*, Vol. LIX, No. 3 (Sept. 17, 1921), 54; Maj. Thomas DeWitt Milling lecture, "The Strategical and Tactical Use of Aircraft," Army War College, May 5, 1922.

[44] List of Non-Fatal Accidents.

[45] Ibid.

[46] Historical Data (WDAGO Form 018) 88th Aero 436th Bombardment Squadron.

[47] Note on History of 88th Observation Squadron, dictated by W[infield] S[cott] H[ensley], Nov. 10, 1931. Some states used their National Guard squadrons during civil disturbances in the 1920's and 1930's.

[48] Mitchell, *Winged Defense*, 75-76, 187-188.